

Are we listening to our adolescents?



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TO understand what our adolescents dream about the future, researchers at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) under the finance ministry conducted an explorative survey between August and September 2021. All eight divisions of Bangladesh and different types of educational systems were covered in this survey, conducted on 145 adolescents. According to the study, adolescents dream of various off-track professions, like being a YouTuber, professional gamer, content creator, voice artiste, philanthropist, cricketer player, etc, in addition to the mainstream professions like doctor, engineer, teacher, banker, lawyer, and maulana (religious preacher). The findings were included in the National Human Development Report 2021.

The adolescents surveyed expressed interest in studying specific subjects that can help them realise their dreams, like fine arts and painting, content creation, and social media growth or ICT. "Yet, they were trapped in the traditional classroom-learning structure, which has little or no significant role in fulfilling their dreams. Some were even ready to quit from this traditional mainstream schooling system that is not modern and unable to accommodate the arrays of dreams and goals of their lives," the report highlighted.

The findings of this survey demonstrate the disconnect between the ambitions of our adolescents and what the present education system offers. What about their parents? Things are beginning to change slowly, and some parents are respecting the dreams of their children. Still, in many cases, a child's dream to become a singer, artist,



PHOTO:
PON CHANGMA

In many cases, a child's dream to become a singer, artist, photographer, or an astronaut is often criticised and dismissed as unrealistic.

main focus of education, which explains the huge dependency of students on coaching centres and private tuition.

Presently, students in Bangladesh are so busy with studies that they hardly find time for extracurricular activities such as sports, music, dance, painting, etc. Rabindranath Tagore emphasised a lot on the importance of holistic education and designing the education system from a child's point-of-view. Stimulating thinking and nurturing imagination as well as creativity are quite central to his thoughts on education. He implemented these ideas while establishing an educational institution in Shantiniketan. "Don't limit your child to your own learning, for he was born in another time"—his warning is still relevant.

The world is going through tremendous changes due to the advancement of technology. Artificial intelligence is having, and will continue to have, influence on all aspects of our society, including employment. Within the next few decades, many professions

that exist now may disappear, while many new professions will emerge. What students are learning today may become irrelevant when they enter the job market. People may not be able to have a single profession throughout their lives.

In a good education system, there should be focus on developing critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and communication, which will give students the skills to retrain every few years and adapt to changing contexts. Bangladesh must consider education as a priority and make the required investments, if our children and young people are to receive education that will prepare them for careers in a diverse range of fields. The aforementioned survey is an example that adolescents are more advanced in their thinking about the future of work. Adults should catch up.

Do parents want their children to be happy? If yes, they have to understand that there are many different routes to happiness. In his book "Happy Ever After," happiness expert Professor Paul Dolan draws on a variety of studies ranging over well being, inequality, and discrimination, to bust the common myths about our sources of happiness. He shows that there can be many unexpected paths to lasting fulfilment. Some of these might involve not going into higher education, choosing not to marry, rewarding acts rooted in self-interest, and caring a little less about living forever.

Children are individual human beings, not parental property and should not be treated as such. It is the parents' responsibility to provide appropriate guidance to their children, so that they can realise their full potential. Instead of imposing their own views, parents should support their children while they navigate through their own lives and find meaning and contentment.

It is important that parents listen to children actively and value their dreams. The education system should adapt to the needs of the adolescents, too, in a world that is changing extremely fast. Adolescents are speaking up. Are we listening?

A region connected by waterways



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WHEN the Indian cargo vessel MV, named after former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, set sail carrying 200 tonnes of food grain on a 2,350 km journey along the waterways from Ganga to Brahmaputra, the world's two largest rivers, via Bangladesh on February 5, it became an important marker of physical connectivity more than just between the two countries. It also conjured up a vision of broader regional linkages. This is the first time that food grain movement is taking place in this waterway route.

More than bilateral connectivity, the vessel's journey has implications not only for ending northeastern Indian states' difficulties due to their landlocked status, but also for holding out the prospects of ending Bangladesh's location as an outlier in efforts to build a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The journey of the vessel may be a pilot project between India and Bangladesh, but it has far-reaching implications for the future in connecting mainland India with its northeastern states, Indian officials said. The waterways will not only

remove geographical hindrance but also provide an economical and convenient transportation for the businesses and people of the region.

In line with India's "Act East" policy, the Indian Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has taken up several infrastructure projects on National Waterway-1, Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route and NW2, through the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWA) to improve connectivity with the northeastern region through waterways via Bangladesh. Sonowal rightly termed the Patna-Pandu route via Bangladesh as the most seamless cargo transportation through Brahmaputra and an opportunity for the people of Assam and other northeastern states of India to connect with the wider world.

The Indian government has undertaken the ambitious Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) with an investment of about Rs 4,600 crore for the capacity augmentation of NW-1 (Ganga) for safe and sustainable movement of vessels of up to 2000 tonnes.

After the MV Lal Bahadur Shastri's journey, Inland Waterway Authority of India is looking to run regular scheduled services on these waterway routes. To improve navigability, two stretches of IBP routes—Sirajganj-Daikhowa and Ashuganj-Zakiganj—are being developed at a cost of Rs 305.84 crores on an 80:20 share basis (80 percent being borne by India and 20 percent by Bangladesh).

It is not just India-Bangladesh connectivity which will get a boost because of the waterway routes, and the route chart of MV Lal Bahadur Shastri from Patna to Pandu will give us an idea of why.

The contracts for dredging on the two stretches for providing and maintaining requisite depth for seven years (from 2019 to 2026) are underway, said the officials, which is expected to provide seamless navigation to India's northeastern states via the IBP route. In 2014-15 to 2016-17, the state-owned Food Corporation of India had moved tonnes of food grains to Agartala using the IBP waterway route when the rail link between West Bengal and the adjoining northeastern region was non-operational during gauge conversion in North Eastern Frontier Railway.

The Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) between India and Bangladesh allows mutual arrangements for the use of their waterways for the movement of goods between the two countries by their vessels. India's National Waterway-1 (Ganga) is connected with National Waterway-2 (Brahmaputra) and National Waterway-16 (River Barak) through India-Bangladesh Protocol routes.

It is not just India-Bangladesh connectivity or the link between mainland India and northeastern India which will get a boost because of the waterway routes, and one look at the route chart of MV Lal Bahadur Shastri from Patna to Pandu will give us an idea of why. It will sail through Bhagalpur, Manihari, Sahibganj (Bihar), Farakka, Tribeni, Kolkata, Haldia, Hemnagar (in

West Bengal), Khulna, Narayanganj-Sirajganj, Chilmari (Bangladesh), Dhubri and Jogighopa (in Assam). If waterways involving India and Bangladesh can be made the preferred mode of transportation, it can open up opportunities for a port-and-jetty-led model along the rivers of the two countries. Another key ingredient of this model would be to develop rail and road transport connections to the port and jetties.

The movement of MV Lal Bahadur Shastri is expected to establish the technical and commercial viability of IWT mode using the multiple waterways, and offer an alternate route for transportation of goods, which will help decongest not just the good traffic by road between India and Bangladesh, but provide an option for transportation of cargo from Bihar to Nepal.

The fact that Bangladesh will be facilitating the goods traffic through waterway routes between mainland India and northeastern India underlines the importance of that country's territory as a crucial bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia through Chattogram and Mongla ports. The potential of a regional network of waterway routes can be multiplied further if Bangladesh can be integrated with the Kaldan multimodal transport hub India has built in Myanmar in close proximity to the northeastern Indian state of Mizoram.

QUOTABLE
Quote

Paulo Coelho
(born August 24, 1947)
Brazilian writer

You drown not by falling into a river, but by staying submerged in it.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Succeed

6 Tooth points

11 Get up

12 Like bar beer

13 Goes under

14 Lane of film

15 Gear part

16 Uno plus due

18 Draw

19 Hoppy brew

20 Nourished

21 German conjunction

22 Get excited

24 Egyptian goddess

25 Shirt parts

27 Tampa Bay team

29 Parent's answer to "Why?"

32 Ulna's place

33 Univ. or acad.

34 Spoil

35 Arrest

36 Crew need

37 Frank holder

38 Bush's successor

40 Make amends

42 Form 1040 user

43 Back biter

44 Extreme diets

45 Impudent

DOWN

1 Item replaced after filling up

2 Meadowlark's cousin

3 Belly dancers use them

4 Inquire

5 Soothing

6 Like some messages

7 Cycle starter

8 Possessions that scream wealth

9 Grilled sandwich

10 Tears along

17 Copy

23 WBA wins

24 Nest egg acct.

26 Spiritual retreats

27 Fled

28 Sinai setting

30 Spa rooms

31 Stubborn

33 Flies high

39 Ran into

41 — degree

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BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT